MALTA-EU STEERING AND ACTION COMMITTEE

FOCUS MEUSAC

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Proposed regulation on construction products

By Julian Micallef

The construction sector represents 15% of value-added of the manufacturing sector in the European Union. However, this substantial figure is not reflected in the same manner in the internal market, given that it is estimated that the sector only contributes to 5% of inter-State trade.

The European Commission is proposing a new regulation, founded on the current legislation on construction products, aimed at facilitating trade in this sector. The range of products considered is broad (over 40) and includes doors, cement, roof products and any other product which is placed on the market to be permanently included in construction work.

The proposed Regulation seeks to address deficiencies identified in the current legislation and emphasises on the need for more clarity, including the precise definition of the subject-matter and the more important concepts in the internal market for construction products. More importantly, it will determine the exact definition of the 'CE' mark for these products. The proposal introduces new and stricter criteria on the notification of entities acting as third parties in the evaluation and verification processes on the consistency of the products.

Simplification remains the main purpose of the proposal. The Malta Standards Authority (MSA) has initiated a consultation process whereby all stakeholders in the sector, particularly with regard to the internal market, may pass on their comments. For further details, kindly contact our office or send an email to the MSA on: consultations.msa@msa.org.mt.

The Priorities of the French Presidency

On 10 July French President Nicolas Sarkozy presented the French Presidency's priorities to the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The Presidency will adopt a citizen-oriented approach. President Sarkozy stressed that "we all have a heavy responsibility", namely "to get Europe out of its crisis". To do this, he said "we must reassure Europeans" and show that Europe is working for everyone.

The Presidency will be addressing four key priorities namely, energy and climate change; migration issues; agriculture; and security and defence.

On energy and climate change, President Sarkozy said that "Europe must set the example", by reaching an agreement on the energy package which will entail reviewing the European Emission Trading Scheme and push the EU-27 for a decision on the distribution of resources in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions not subject to this scheme.

Immigration and asylum will be debated at European level. Better protection of the EU's external borders will be administered as well as organising immigration on the basis of the reception capacity of each Member State in a spirit of shared responsibility.

The French Presidency will also be launching a security strategy to strengthen military and crisis management, while placing the EU at the forefront in the fight against terrorism.

The Presidency's priorities were presented by the French Ambassador Jean-Marc Rives, during an activity organised locally by FME and the French Embassy. This was the last event organised by FME, which is now part of MEUSAC.

Left to right: Claire Bodonyi, Ambassador Jean-Marc Rives, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information Dr Chris Said, and Michel Hermitte.

EU FUNDING - EXPERIENCES FROM MALTA

Micro SME benefits from *Leonardo da Vinci* programme

A Maltese micro-company that has been active in exploiting the benefits brought about by EU membership is MECB Ltd, an engineering consultancy bureau, the activities of which relate to the provision of specialised training and technical consultancy services.

MECB Ltd has recently completed a *Leonardo da Vinci* project involving the setting up of a Computer Aided Design (CAD) training infrastructure in Bucharest, Romania, and the development of relevant CAD training courseware translated into a number of EU languages. Nicknamed CECA, this project ran over a two-year period and involved a total of six European partners.

The relevance of this project is that EU Member States (MS), in correlation with the EU Lisbon Agenda goals, have an obligation to improve their overall innovation potential. As a matter of fact, the EU Commission has an Innovation Policy that involves an innovation scoreboard rating to assess the innovative potential of every MS. Design is one key activity that contributes to innovation in the MS. In this respect, EU citizens need to be professionally trained in the design of innovative artefacts, this in itself requiring the transfer of knowledge on both design technology and methodology. This implies that training in CAD, as one type of design technology, needs to be professionally delivered and certified to an international level by competent testing centres. The eventual training of CAD Operators and their harmonised certification is thus an important step towards the exploitation of CAD as a technology supporting innovation in the EU and its MS. In this respect, the CECA project has, through its partners, disseminated information and training services to relevant stakeholders on the developed and certified CAD courses.

As explained by MECB's Director Dr Ing. Jonathan C. Borg, "Our experience in EU-funded projects has been a very good one for various reasons, not just because of the acquisition of a modest financial grant. Of course, like most new ventures, initially one may encounter a number of challenges. However, the overall experience is a very positive one indeed."

OVERLEAF: MORE NEWS · DID YOU KNOW...?

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Transparency and regulation in view of financial crisis

By Julian Micallef

At the last Economic and Financial Affairs Council (of 8 July) it was concluded that there is a need for active measures on transparency for banks and other financial institutions and that credit rating agencies must be regulated.

These last years have witnessed how various deficiencies and lax practices in an economic system have caused credit problems across the world, leading to intervention from central banks to keep financial markets afloat. One of the financial sectors which came in for criticism was in fact that of agencies whose work is to determine which financial institutions are reliable and to what extent. It is clear that this system did not work and that the alarm on the crisis, which could have been avoided with greater caution, was not sounded in good time.

The Council is thus giving its support to a regime where credit rating agencies are subject to a European registration system and where international cooperation in this regard is increased.

On the other hand, the Council is encouraging banks and other financial institutions to increase transparency and to abide by a report prepared by the Committee of European Banking Supervisors. If the institutions, quickly and comprehensively, provide information on the difficulties that they are facing, it is more likely that trust in the markets is regained, as operators become more knowledgeable of the situation.

Commissioner McCreevy has recently announced that new measures will be proposed in October.

European Commission's decision regarding an all-encompassing European licensing of music

By Brenda Azzopardi

The European Commission and the European Composers' and Songwriters' Alliance (ECSA) have lately been in conflict with one another, with the latter threatening to withdraw the singer songwriters' and lyricists' catalogues from circulation. On the 16th July the Commission put forward plans to enhance competition with regard to the collective management of copyright royalties levied on the playing of music on the internet, cable and satellite. This prohibits 24 European collecting societies from restricting competition by limiting their ability to offer their services to authors and commercial users outside their domestic territory.

Music copyright groups were ordered to put an end to a system that makes it difficult for online music stores to buy EU-wide licenses. According to ECSA, which is supported by famous artists like Sir Paul McCartney, such a step might cause irreparable damage to the creation of music in the European Union, a loss of an extreme amount of revenue for many creators around the world whose livelihood depends on this sector. In its view, the restriction of consumers' choice and the increase in piracy could be affected by the Commission's decisions.

Two recent complaints highlighted the fact that broadcasters cannot sign multi-repertoire licensing agreements with two copyright companies because of territorial restrictions on the licensing agreements imposed by the copyright companies. In this regard, the European Commission wants to discard this territoriality aspect. According to ECSA, more competition would hurt smaller collecting agencies and less well-known musicians.

DID YOU KNOW...?

Bathing Water Quality

By Svetlana Rose Curmi

Did you know that the European Union has legislation in force to protect the quality of its bathing waters? In fact, the quality of bathing waters has improved considerably since the issue of the EU's Bathing Water Directive in 1976. This Directive was revised in 2006 to ensure updated parameters by which water quality is tested, but also to provide better information to citizens about the quality of their bathing water.

To ensure good quality bathing water, the EU sets limits for physical, chemical and microbiological parameters. National authorities take regular samples of bathing water to ascertain that the levels set by the Directive are not exceeded. These samples are usually taken two weeks before commencement of the bathing season, that is some time in April or May, following which samples are taken on average once a month during the bathing season up to November.

Did you know that every year the European Commission publishes a comprehensive report on the basis of the studies carried out by the EU-27? Such a report should set your mind at rest when organising your next holiday! This year's report, issued in May, reveals that 95% of coastal bathing areas in the European Union conform to the parameters set by the Directive. In Malta, 87 sites were sampled, of which 95.4% met the set levels.

Locally, bathing water sampling is carried out jointly by the Environmental Health Unit within the Department for Environmental Health (DEH) and the Environment Protection Directorate within the Malta Environment and Planning Authority. Regular reports are uploaded on the DEH website and available on http://sahha.gov.mt/pages.aspx?page=1055.

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Proposta għal Regolament tal-UE dwar il-prodotti tal-kostruzzjoni

Minn Julian Micallef

Is-settur tal-kostruzzjoni jirrappreżenta 15% tal-valur miżjud fil-qasam tal-manifattura fl-Unjoni Ewropea. Fl-istess waqt, minkejja dan l-ammont sostanzjali, ma jidhirx li għandu l-istess importanza fis-suq intern, fejn hu kkalkulat li jikkostitwixxi biss 5% tal-kummerċ li jsir bejn il-pajjiżi tal-Komunita`.

Il-Kummissjoni Ewropea qiegħda tipproponi regolament ġdid, li jibni fuq il-liġi li diġa` teżisti, dwar il-prodotti tal-kostruzzjoni. U hemm diversi prodotti (iktar minn 40) li huma koperti taħt din id-definizzjoni, inklużi l-bibien, il-konkos, il-prodotti għas-soqfa u kull prodott li jitpoġġa fis-suq biex jiddaħħal b'mod permanenti f'xogħol ta' kostruzzjoni.

Ir-Regolament il-ġdid li qed tipproponi l-Kummissjoni Ewropea jfittex li jindirizza dawn in-nuqqasijiet li ġew identifikati, u għalhekk jenfasizza l-bżonn ta' iktar ċarezza, inkluż id-definizzjoni preċiża tas-suġġett u l-kunċetti l-iktar importanti fil-qasam tas-suq intern għal prodotti ta' kostruzzjoni. Forsi iktar importanti huwa l-fatt li se tiġi determinata t-tifsira speċifika tat-tikketta CE għal dawn il-prodotti. Il-proposta ddaħħal kriterji ġodda u iktar stretti rigward in-notifikazzjoni ta' entitajiet li jaħdmu bħala terzi persuni fil-proċess ta' evalwar u verifikazzjoni dwar il-konsistenza tal-prodott.

Is-simplifikazzjoni tibqa' l-għan prinċipali tar-Regolament propost. L-Awtorita` Maltija dwar l-Istandards (MSA) nediet proċess ta' konsultazzjoni fejn kull min hu nteressat f'dan il-qasam, partikolarment fir-rigward ta' l-isfruttament pożittiv tas-suq intern, jista' jgħaddi l-kummenti tiegħu. Għal iktar informazzjoni agħmel kuntatt mal-uffiċċju tal-MEUSAC jew inkella agħmel kuntatt mal-MSA permezz tal-indirizz elettroniku: consultations.msa@msa.org.mt.

Il-Prijoritajiet tal-Presidenza Franċiża

Fl-10 ta' Lulju l-President Franċiż Nicolas Sarkozy ippreżenta l-prijoritajiet tal-Presidenza Franċiża lill-Parlament Ewropew fi Strassburgu.

Il-Presidenza se tkun qegħda taħdem favur involviment ikbar taċ-ċittadin fit-teħid tad-deċiżjonijiet fit-tmexxija tal-UE. Il-President Sarkozy saħaq li "kull għandna responsabbilta` biex noħorġu lill-Ewropa mis-sitwazzjoni li tinsab fiha bħalissa". Iżda biex dan iseħħ, kompla jgħid Sarkozy, "irridu nisguraw lill-Ewropej li l-Ewropa tassew qed taħdem għal kulħadd".

L-erba' prijoritajiet li se tkun qed taħdem fuqhom il-Presidenza Franċiża huma l-enerġija u t-tibdil fil-klima, l-immigrazzjoni, l-agrikoltura, kif ukoll is-sigurta` u d-difiża.

Dwar l-enerġija u t-tibdil fil-klima, il-President Sarkozy qal li l-Ewropa għandha tkun minn ta' quddiem biex tatwa miżuri u tilħaq ftehim dwar pakkett ta' enerġija li fost affarijiet oħra għandu jirrevedi l-iskema tal-UE għall-iskambju ta' kwoti ta' emissjonijiet, kif ukoll tittieħed deċiżjoni dwar id-distribuzzjoni ta' riżorsi biex jitnaqqsu l-emissjonijiet ta' gassijiet b'effett ta' serra li mhumiex f'din l-iskema.

L-immigrazzjoni u l-politika tal-ażil ukoll se jkunu diskussi fuq livell Ewropew. Issemmiet ukoll l-importanza tad-difiża tal-fruntieri tal-UE. Sfida oħra għall-Presidenza hija li torganizza t-talbiet għal ażil fi Stati Membri tal-UE skond id-daqs tagħhom biex b'hekk ikun assigurat li kull pajjiż igorr il-piż mistħoqq.

Il-Presidenza Franċiża se tniedi strateġija ta' sigurta` biex issaħħaħ id-difiża militari tal-UE. Huwa maħsub li din għandha tpoġġi lill-UE minn ta' quddiem fil-glieda kontra t-terroriżmu.

Lokalment, il-prijoritajiet tal-Presidenza Franċiża kienu ppreżentati mill-Ambaxxatur Franċiż Jean-Marc Rives, waqt attivita` organizzata mill-FME flimkien mal-Ambaxxata Franċiża. Din kienet l-aħħar attivita` tal-*Forum*. L-FME issa ġie integrat fi ħdan il-MEUSAC.

Mix-xellug għal-lemin: Claire Bodonyi, l-Ambaxxatur Jean-Marc Rives, is-Segretarju Parlamentari responsabbli għad-Djalogu Pubbliku u Informazzjoni Dr Chris Said, u Michel Hermitte.

FONDI UE - ESPERJENZI MINN MALTA

Intrapriża żgħira tibbenefika mill-programm *Leonardo da Vinci*

Waħda mill-intrapriżi żgħar li qegħda tisfrutta l-benefiċċji li ġabet magħha l-isħubija ta' Malta fl-Unjoni Ewropea hija MECB Ltd. Din toffri servizz ta' konsulenza fuq l-inġinerija u attivitajiet relatati ma' taħriġ speċjalizzat u konsulenza teknika.

MECB Ltd għada kemm temmet proġett *Leonardo da Vinci* li kien jikkonċerna l-iżvilupp ta' taħriġ infrastrutturali fuq il-*Computer Aid Design (CAD)* f'Bukarest, ir-Rumanija, u t-traduzzjoni ta' dan it-taħriġ f'numru ta' lingwi li jintużaw fl-Unjoni Ewropea. Dan il-proġett, li kellu l-isem CECA, dam sejjer sentejn u kellu sitt imsieħba Ewropej.

Ir-relevanza ta' dan il-proġett hi li, fid-dawl tal-Aġenda ta' Lisbona, l-Istati Membri għandhom l-obbligu li jtejbu l-potenzjal innovattiv tagħhom. Fil-fatt, il-Kummissjoni Ewropea għandha Politika ta' Innovazzjoni li fiha tħaddem *scoreboard* innovattiv biex tevalwa l-innovazzjoni ta' kull pajjiż. Id-disinn huwa attivita` importanti li jikkontribwixxi għall-innovazzjoni fl-Istati Membri. Għaldaqstant, iċ-ċittadini Ewropej għandhom bżonn ikunu mħarrġa b'mod professjonali fuq id-disinn innovattiv, u għalhekk dan jinħtieġ tagħlim fuq id-disinn teknoloġiku u l-metodoloġija. Dan jimplika li t-taħriġ fuq CAD għandu jsir b'mod professjonali u jiġi ċċertifikat b'mod internazzjonali minn ċentri kompetenti f'dan it-taħriġ. Eventwalment it-taħriġ fuq it-tħaddim tal-CAD, u l-armonizzazzjoni taċ-ċertifikazzjoni, huma tarġa importanti biex jiġi sfruttat il-CAD bħala teknoloġija li tagħti appoġġ lill-innovazzjoni fl-Ewropa u fl-Istati Membri tagħha. Permezz tal-proġett CECA, l-imsieħba nvoluti pprovdew informazzjoni u taħriġ għall-*istakeholders* fl-iżvilupp u ċ-ċertifikazzjoni tat-taħriġ tal-CAD.

Id-direttur ta' MECB Ltd Dr Ing. Jonathan C. Borg qal: "L-esperjenza tagħna fuq il-fondi tal-Unjoni Ewropea kienet waħda tajba ħafna, u mhux biss għax ikun hemm għajnuna finanzjarja modesta. Ovvjament, bħal kull min jidħol l-ewwel darba għal dawn l-esperjenzi, fil-bidu tiltaqa' ma' numru ta' sfidi. Madankollu l-esperjenza kienet waħda pożittiva għall-aħħar".

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Trasparenza u regolamentazzjoni fid-dawl tal-kriżi finanzjarja

Minn Julian Micallef

Fl-aħħar Kunsill tal-Affarijiet Ekonomiċi u Finanzjarji (tat-8 ta' Lulju) ġie konkluż li hemm bżonn miżuri attivi dwar it-trasparenza tal-banek u istituzzjonijiet oħra finanzjarji u li l-aġenziji li jagħmlu stima tal-kreditu jkunu regolati.

Matul dawn l-aħħar snin rajna kif numru ta' nuqqasijiet u laxkezza fis-sistema ekonomika wasslu għal problemi ta' kreditu madwar id-dinja, bil-konsegwenza li banek ċentrali kellhom jintervjenu biex iżommu s-swieq finanzjarji milli jitkissru. Wieħed mis-setturi finanzjarji li ġie kkritikat kien proprju dak ta' l-aġenziji li xogħolhom hu li jiddeterminaw liema istituzzjonijiet finanzjarji tista' torbot fuqhom u sa liema livell. Huwa ċar li din is-sistema ma ħadmitx u li l-allarm dwar il-kriżi, li fl-aħħar mill-aħħar kienet tista' tiġi evitata b'iktar prudenza, baqa' ma ndaqqx fi żmien tajjeb.

Il-Kunsill għalhekk ta l-appoġġ tiegħu għal reġim fejn l-aġenziji li jistmaw il-kreditu jkunu soġġetti għal sistema Ewropea ta' reġistrazzjoni u li l-koperazzjoni internazzjonali f'dan ir-rigward tkompli tiżdied.

Min-naħa l-oħra l-Kunsill qiegħed jinkoraġġixxi lill-banek u lill-istituzzjonijiet finanzjarji l-oħra fil-ħidma tagħhom bħala industrija biex ikunu iktar trasparenti u li jagħtu każ ta' rapport li ġie ppreparat mill-Kumitat tas-sorveljaturi Ewropej tal-banek.

Jekk l-istituzzjonijiet jinfurmaw malajr u b'mod sħiħ bid-diffikultajiet li jkunu qed jiltaqgħu magħhom, hemm iktar ċans li l-fiduċja fis-swieq tista' tintrebaħ, hekk kif l-operaturi jkunu jafu iktar fejn qegħdin.

Matul dawn l-aħħar ġimgħat, il-Kummissarju McCreevy ħabbar li ser jipproponi l-miżuri ġodda f'Ottobru li ġej.

Deċiżjoni mill-Kummissjoni Ewropea rigward il-liċenzja Ewropea tal-mużika

Minn Brenda Azzopardi

Il-Kummissjoni Ewropea u l-*European Composers' and Songwriters' Alliance* (ECSA) dan l-aħħar qegħdin f'kunflitt bejniethom bl-aġenzija theddled li tirtira miċ-ċirkulazzjoni l-katalgi tal-kittieba tal-mużika u l-kittieba tal-lirika. Fi 16 ta' Lulju l-Kummissjoni ppjanat kif tmexxi 'l quddiem il-ħsieb tagħha dwar l-introduzzjoni ta' kompetizzjoni ikbar fl-immaniġġjar tal-*copyright royalties* miġbura minn fuq id-daqq tal-mużika fuq l-*internet*, il-*cable* u s-satellita. Din iżżomm lil 24 *collecting societies* milli jxekklu l-kompetizzjoni billi jillimitaw l-abilta' tagħhom li joffru s-servizzi tal-awturi u ta' min jużahom għan-negozju barra mit-territorju domestiku tagħhom.

Copyright groups tal-mużika kienu ordnati li jtemmu s-sistema li tagħmilha diffiċli għal ħwienet tal-mużika *online* biex jixtru liċenzji madwar l-Ewropa. Skond l-ECSA, li tgawdi mill-appoġġ ta' artisti famużi bħal Sir Paul McCartney, jekk il-Kummissjoni Ewropea twettaq dawn id-deċiżjonijiet fil-prattika, dawn jistgħu joħolqu ħsara irreparabbli għall-mużika fl-Unjoni Ewropea, kif ukoll telf kbir ta' dħul għall-ħafna mużiċisti madwar id-dinja, li xogħolhom jiddependi minn dan is-settur. Fl-opinjoni ta' din l-organizzazzjoni, id-deċiżjonijiet tal-Kummissjoni jistgħu jirriżultaw fi tnaqqis fl-għażla għall-konsumatur u f'żieda fil-pirateria.

Dan l-aħħar saru żewġ ilmenti li ġibdu l-attenzjoni għall-fatt li x-xandara tal-mezzi tal-komunikazzjoni tax-xandir ma jkunux jistgħu jiffirmaw iktar minn kuntratt wieħed għal repertorju mużikali ma' kumpaniji diskografiċi, minħabba r-restrizzjonijiet territorjali imposti fuq il-kuntratti dwar liċenzji minn dawn l-istess kumpaniji. B'hekk il-Kummissjoni Ewropea tixtieq tnaqqas ir-restrizzjonijiet mill-aspett territorjali. B'dan il-mod, l-ECSA taħseb li kompetizzjoni ikbar tista' tkun il-kaġun li *collecting agencies* iżgħar u mużiċisti inqas famużi ħa jbagħtu.

KONT TAF... ?

Il-kwalita` tal-ilma għall-għawm

Minn Svetlana Rose Curmi

Kont taf li l-Unjoni Ewropea għandha liġi biex tipproteġi l-kwalita` tal-ilma għall-għawm? Id-Direttiva Ewropea dwar il-Kwalita` tal-Ilma għall-Għawm daħlet fis-seħħ fl-1976. Minn dak in-nhar 'l hawn il-kwalita` tal-ilma tjiebet ħafna. Fl-2006 din id-Direttiva kienet riveduta biex iddaħlu parametri oħra li għandhom jintlaħqu meta jsiru testijiet għall-kwalita` tal-ilma għall-għawm, kif ukoll poġġiet enfasi fuq id-dritt taċ-ċittadin li jkun infurmat dwar il-kwalita` tal-ilma.

Biex tassigura ilma ta' kwalita` tajba għall-għawm, l-Unjoni Ewropea introduċiet parametri li fihom għandhom jinżammu l-elementi fiżiċi, kimiċi u mikro-bijoloġiċi li jikkaratterizzaw it-testijiet tal-ilma. L-awtoritajiet fi ħdan is-27 Stat Membru tal-Unjoni Ewropea regolarment jagħmlu testijiet fuq kampjuni tal-ilma biex jaċċertaw li dawn il-parametri ma jaqbżux il-livelli mitluba mid-Direttiva. L-ewwel test isir ġimgħatejn qabel ma jiftaħ l-istaġun tal-għawm, jiġifieri f'April jew f'Mejju. Iktar testijiet isiru matul ix-xhur sajfin u jibqgħu sejrin sa Novembru. Fil-fatt isir mill-inqas test fix-xahar!

Kont taf li kull sena l-Unjoni Ewropea tippubblika rapport li jkopri l-istudji kollha li jsiru mis-27 Stat Membru tal-Unjoni Ewropea? Dan żgur iwassal għal iktar serħan tal-moħħ meta tkun qed tippjana l-vaganza tiegħek! Skond rapport ippubblikat f'Mejju ta' din is-sena, 95% tas-siti fejn isir l-għawm mal-kosta kienu konformi mal-parametri mitluba mid-Direttiva. F'Malta 87 sit kienu eżaminati, li minnhom 95.4% laħqu l-livelli stabbiliti.

L-entitajiet f'Malta responsabbli mit-teħid tal-kampjuni tal-ilma huma l-*Environmental Health Unit* fi ħdan id-Dipartiment għas-Saħħa Ambjentali (DEH) flimkien mal-*Environment Protection Directorate* fi ħdan l-Awtorita' Maltija għall-Ambjent u l-Ippjanar. Rapporti dwar il-kwalita` tal-ilma għall-għawm jitqiegħdu regolarment fuq is-sit elettroniku tad-DEH f' dan l-indirizz: http://sahha.gov.mt/pages.aspx?page=1055 .

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